



Lesson Three

Past Information: How Do We Know?

Goal: Students will understand how we know about life in the early 1800's when no one is alive from that time period to inform us.

Objectives:

- compile a list of ways historians use to gather information to learn about life in the early 1800's
- be able to explain what specific information we would get from journals, diaries, letters, drawings, sketches, ledgers, pictures and artifacts
- write a journal entry about a day in your life, including details, that will allow children in the future to know what life is like today

Colorado Model Content Standards Addressed:

Geography: K-4 (6.1) 5-8 (6.1)

Reading & Writing: K-8 (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)

History: K-4 (2.2, 4.1) 5-8 (2.2, 4.1)

Materials Needed:

Journal One & Journal Two (included)

Background Information:

Journals, diaries, letters, drawings, sketches, ledgers, pictures, and artifacts are ways we learn and know about the past. If the students do not come up with this list during Activity One, give them some clues.

Activity One:

Divide the students into groups. Each group will need to choose a captain to lead their discussion, and a recorder to write the group's ideas on a sheet of paper. Brainstorm: "How do we know about life in the 1800's when no one from that time period is alive?" When brainstorming is complete, select a spokesperson to share your group's information with the entire class. As each group presents, the teacher will list the ideas on the board without repeating items. When all groups have finished reporting, analyze the list of ideas and discuss what type of information you would expect to glean from each. Talk about accuracy and reliability. Why is that important?

Activity Two:

Included in this lesson are two journal entries. The first entry was lacking details and the second was full of details. Read both journal entries orally to the class and discuss. Which was better and why? Be certain the students get the sense that more information was better and that details help them to visualize. At the end of the discussion, the students will write a journal entry about a day in their life. They may choose any day. Remind them about the importance of details in their writing. Share the stories.

Journal One

October 15, 2008

Today is Tuesday. I woke up early and took a shower. I ate my breakfast and got dressed for school. We didn't do anything new in class today. I played a lot at recess. After school I went home and did my homework and then watched TV. I played with my little brother while my mom cooked. We ate dinner and I helped with the dishes. After my bath, I went to bed.

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Journal Two

3 March 1846

We arrived at Bent's Fort just at dark and were very grateful to be inside out of the terrible, terrible wind. I am far, far from St. Louis now. The fort is huge and made of adobe, which is dirt mixed with water and chopped straw. How different from the gracious wooden homes of St. Louis. After so many long hard days on the trail, believe me the fort was a very welcomed site.

The fireplace sets oddly into the corner making all warm and cozy. There are chunks of buffalo meat and onions on a skewer in the reflector oven, nicely spiced with garlic, salt, pepper and of course chilies. Everything here is seasoned with chilies. It is cooking so slowly and we are all so hungry. We ate the water crackers while perishing for the meat to be done. Finally it is ready! I just had my chunk of roasted buffalo meat. It was not at all gamey or unpleasant, but quite delicious.

Tomorrow begins my new life as a worker for the Bent St. Vrain Company. There are so many little things to learn and remember. Tomorrow we sign our contracts. What lies ahead? For now it is time to sleep as tomorrow promises to be a challenging day.